

**James Madison to Edmund Randolph, July 16, 1782.
Partly in Cipher. Transcription: The Writings of James
Madison, ed. Gaillard Hunt. New York: G.P. Putnam's
Sons, 1900-1910.**

TO EDMUND RANDOLPH.¹

1 From the Madison Papers (1840).

Philadelphia, July 16, 1782.

Dear Sir, —Notwithstanding the defensive professions of the enemy, they seem to be waging an active war against the post-riders. The mail for the Eastward, on Wednesday last, shared the same fate which the Southern mail did a few weeks ago, and, it is said, from the same identical villains. This operation has withdrawn them from their Southern stand, and secured the arrival of the mail, which brings your favor of the fifth instant. I fully concur in the change of cypher which you suggest, and understand the reference for a key-word. I have been in some pain from the danger incident to the cypher we now use. The enemy, I am told, have in some instances published their intercepted cyphers. On our first meeting, I propose to prepare, against another separation, a cypher framed by Mr. Livingston on a more enlarged and complicated plan than ours, of which he has furnished me several blank printed copies.

Your computation of the numbers in Virginia tallies exactly with one transmitted by Mr. Jefferson, in an answer to several queries from Mr. Marbois. It is as accurate as the official returns to the Executive of the Militia would admit. His proportion of the fencibles to the whole number of souls is stated precisely as your computation states it.

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You will continue your information on the case of the flag, and send me the acts of the Legislature as fast as they are printed. Will you be so good, also, as to obtain from the Auditors a state of the balance due on the principles established by law, and let me know when and how it is to be applied for?—as also what chance there is of obtaining a regular remittance of future allowance?

General Washington and Count Rochambeau met here on Saturday evening. The object of their consultation is among the arcana of war.

A despatch from the Commander in Chief communicated to Congress yesterday a late correspondence between him and General Carleton, principally on the subject of two traitors, who, under cover of a flag, have exposed themselves to arrest in New Jersey, and had sentence of death passed upon them. General Carleton, among other observations on the subject, says that, “In a civil war, between people of one Empire, there can, during the contest, be no treason at all,”—and asks a passport for General Robinson and Mr. Ludlow to confer with General Washington, or persons appointed by him, and to settle arrangements on this idea. General Washington declines the conference, observing, that the proposed subject of it is within civil resort. Whereupon General Carleton asks—“Am I to apply to Congress to admit persons to conferences at Philadelphia? Can any deputation be sent by Congress to your camp to meet persons appointed by me? Or will you, sir, undertake to manage our common interest?” The drift of all this need not be pointed out to you. As a counterpart to it, the British General proposes, in order to remove all objection to an exchange of soldiers for seamen, that the latter shall be perfectly free, and the former subject to the condition of not serving *against the thirteen Provinces* for one year, within which period he is very sanguine that an end will be put to the calamities of the present war.

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The same despatch informs Congress that a party of the enemy have lately made a successful incursion upon the settlements of Mohawk, have re-occupied Oswego, and are extending themselves into the Western country. However little these movements may coincide with a defensive plan, they coincide perfectly with ideas which will not fail to be urged at a pacification.

Messrs. Montgomery and Root returned yesterday from their Eastern deputation. They have not yet made their report. The former complains that several of the States are appropriating the taxes, which they lay as their quota of the eight millions, to internal uses. He owns that the knowledge he has obtained of the case changed his mind on that head, and that if the ground was to be trodden over again, he should take a very different part in Congress. He adds, that the current opinion is, that a vessel arrived at Quebec brings a Royal Charter for Vermont; that the people there are in much confusion, and many of them disposed to re-unite with New Hampshire. A letter to Mr. Livingston, from Mr. Livermore, corroborates this good news. It imports that a very unexpected turn had taken place in the temper of the people, between the river and the ridge, that they were petitioning New Hampshire to be restored to that State, and that measures would be taken in concert with New York for that purpose. The revolution in the sentiments of Montgomery may be owing, in part, to the new relation in which Pennsylvania stands to Connecticut, which, he says, is governed on this occasion by interested individuals. The controversy between Pennsylvania and Connecticut will, I suppose, be now resumed, and put into a course for decision, the return of Mr. Root having removed the cause which suspended it.

In the beginning of this month, committees were appointed, in pursuance of a previous resolution for such an appointment every half-year, to examine into the proceedings of the several Executive Departments, and make report to Congress. This plan was adopted not only to discharge the general duty of Congress, and to satisfy their constituents,

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but also that such reports might shelter, in some degree, faithful officers from unmerited imputations and suspicions, as well as expose to just censure those of an opposite character. * * *

This cypher, I find, is extremely tedious, and liable to errors.

General Carleton, in his letter to General Washington above quoted, says, with respect to Lippencot only, that the court had passed their judgment, and that as soon as the length of the proceedings would admit, a copy should be sent to him. It is inferred that this murderer will not be given up, and consequently a vicarious atonement must be made by the guiltless Asgill.